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# **UFAHAMU**

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**Founded by the African Activist Association**

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UFAHAMU  
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"Children from an MDICP sample village in Mchinji District, Malawi" Photographed by Joshua Wood

***ufahamu-n.* [Swahili] understanding**

*Ufahamu*, UCLA's multidisciplinary Africanist student journal, seeks contributions that challenge broadly accepted conceptualizations of African studies. Since 1970, *Ufahamu* has maintained its original vision of creating a forum for protest against the increasingly western-dominated and exclusionary African Studies establishment. The journal continues to publish the work of those marginalized by the academic press—Africans, people of African descent, students, and non-academics. Together with our readers and contributors, we reaffirm our commitment to create intellectual linkages and feature current critical views.



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**Kim Yi Dionne** is a Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science at UCLA. Her first qualifying paper focused on the importance of national executives' time horizons in the provision of HIV/AIDS policies and programs. Her dissertation research is on the political economy of HIV/AIDS interventions in sub-Saharan Africa, with special attention to Malawi. She is particularly interested in the local realities of national and global promises to intervene against the AIDS epidemic.

**Kim Foulds** is a doctoral student in Social Sciences and Comparative Education at UCLA. Her current research interests are gendered curriculums in primary and secondary Kenyan schools, female political representation, and the brain drain in Kenya.

**Andrea Kendall-Taylor** is a graduate student in the Department of Political Science at UCLA. Andrea earned her bachelor's degree in Political Science at Princeton University, and her Master's degree at UCLA where she wrote her Master's thesis on the effects of oil price volatility on the fiscal policies of oil-producing countries. Her dissertation work also addresses the political economy of oil abundant countries, focusing on the political sources



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## Editors' Introduction

### Moving Beyond African Studies Centers

In our previous issue, we brought to light the withdrawal of *Ufahamu's* financial support from the James S. Coleman African Studies Center (JSCASC) as a result of the loss of federal Title VI funds at UCLA. Though initially frustrated with the difficult situation we then faced, *Ufahamu* has received significant support from both students and former *Ufahamu* editors. *Ufahamu* began as a challenge to the African Studies establishment and is, in a way, reclaiming our grassroots origins by expanding the leadership structure to include more voices in a collective fashion. Some of *Ufahamu's* former editors have agreed to participate in the newly-formed *Ufahamu* External Advisory Board, which provides counsel and support to *Ufahamu's* student leadership. UCLA graduate students have also responded with great enthusiasm for *Ufahamu*. Unable to operate with a part-time paid staff member as before, *Ufahamu* called upon UCLA Africanists to contribute time and effort to manage the production of the journal. A small but determined group of graduate students stepped up to the challenge and the management of *Ufahamu* shifted to a more collegial body, dubbed the Senior Editorial Collective. Just months after the formation of the collective, *Ufahamu* has applied and successfully received financial support from the UCLA GSA Publications division, allowing us to continue production of the journal.

The response of the greater *Ufahamu* community should not have surprised us. The initial withdrawal of support from our previous institutional home was perhaps a blessing in disguise. With continued support, we would

not have sought out the counsel and support of the greater *Ufahamu* community. Originally seen as an obstacle, this experience has led to fresh ideas for *Ufahamu*, both for the present and in the future.

More broadly, the difficult situation required us to take a critical look at the role of African studies centers. A major purpose of an African studies center is to provide a community for a university's Africanists, through facilitating communication and providing resources to relevant activities. When area studies centers are coming under fire from those who question the relevance of focused studies based on geographical boundaries, we should review the role area studies centers play. A re-examination is especially current as the trend has been—and will continue to be—a shift away from federal financing for African Studies to other, more strategic sites like East Asia and the Middle East, thus reducing the number and strength of existing African studies centers nationwide. Though the ease which area studies centers provide in taking on the various tasks needed to coordinate communication, events, and resources, an Africanist community need not rely on a center to achieve a meaningful exchange of ideas and progression of the study of Africa. Africanist communities are not necessarily the product of African studies centers, and can, in fact, thrive outside of an institutional home. *Ufahamu's* recent successful rebound is evidence of that.

This special issue of *Ufahamu* is a testament to the continuing strength of African Studies at UCLA. In this issue, we present a collection of field notes captured by UCLA graduate students conducting field work in Africa. The diversity of disciplines represented, topics studied, country contexts, and research methods mirror the diversity of African Studies. Some articles reflect on

the importance of preparation for fieldwork, others describe how even prepared researchers will find a need to adapt once in the context of study. We share these field notes to not only highlight challenges researchers face in the field, but also to demonstrate the wealth of information one can find only in the field. Representing research in West Africa are: John McCauley, chronicling his experience conducting a cross-border study of ethnic identity; Lauren Adrover, presenting ethnographic research from the Cape Coast in Ghana; Emad Mirmotahari, discussing interpersonal interactions and cultural observations in Senegal and The Gambia; and Tyson Roberts, analyzing the changing political institutions and economic policies of three West African countries. Representing East Africa, Kim Foulds writes on the challenges faced by the Nile Basin Initiative, following a collection of interviews in Ethiopia. Writing on the liberation movements in Eritrea and East Timor, Awet Weldemichael presents a comparative reflection on fieldwork in two different contexts. Nathaniel Kendall-Taylor presents initial findings from his dissertation research on the cultural and material factors influencing treatment-seeking behavior in coastal Kenya. In the same area of Kenya, Andrea Kendall-Taylor presents preliminary field notes of a sport-in-development research project, focusing on the importance of monitoring and evaluation. And finally, representing Southern Africa, Kim Yi Dionne closes the issue with her preconceptions and postreflections of conducting pre-dissertation research while simultaneously working on a large-scale survey project in Malawi.

We hope this issue is an example of the enduring strength of *Ufahamu* and African Studies at UCLA. We want to thank the greater *Ufahamu* community for its continued support.

Sincerely,

Kim Yi Dionne  
Zachariah Mampilly  
Co-Editors-In-Chief

## ESSAYS